

Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Incorporated

MAY 1996

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting : May 3 **Mr J McLaughlin: Black-eared Miner**
Meeting: Jun 7 **Mr Rohan Bugg: The Kimberley**
Excursion: May 5 **Landcare Centre, Warrambeen:**
Ian and Trish Taylor
Excursion: Jun 9 **Wombat Forest: David Endacott**



President: Mr G Binns **Ph:**
Secretary: Mr L Fink
Treasurer: Ms S Davison
Editor: Mr A Dyson

Postal Address:
PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350.

Meetings are held at the Art Building,
School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard
St South, commencing at 7.30 pm.

Excursions commence from the corner
of Sturt and Armstrong Sts., Ballarat, at
9.30 am for full-day excursions or at 1.30
pm for half-day excursions.

Field Reports

Helen Burgess - noticing that magpies seem to be particularly vocal this year.

Lyndsay Fink - a pair of Cape Barren Geese grazing at Churchill Island. Lyndsay had also seen a raptor - a splayed out tail, bigger than a Black-shouldered Kite and smaller than a Brown Falcon. It had been seen scaring off smaller birds before disappearing. Greg suggested this was characteristic of the Goshawks - flying low over scrub and disturbing small birds.

Ken Hammond - in Wendouree - a Brown Goshawk and a Grey Butcherbird.

Greg Binns - had also seen a Grey Butcherbird in Mt Pleasant.

Frank Harrap - three Blue-winged Parrots on the Ridge Road in the Wombat Forest. Frank observed that there is great movement of smaller birds such as silvereyes in the Mount Helen area.

Diary Dates

Tuesday 28th May 7.30 pm at Avis Barlows',
, via the service road off Fiskin Road.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

Please pay your subs. at the monthly meeting or post them to our Treasurer (Stephanie Davison) - PO Box 328W, Ballarat West 3350. Fees are - Ordinary Member (\$14.00), Family (\$22.00), Distant Member (\$10.00), Student (\$7.00). If you want the newsletter to be posted please add an extra \$6.00.

Tim D'Ombra is propagating a large range of indigenous plants at his Dereel nursery. He is experimenting with seeds and cuttings. Recently he has been trying to grow a variety of salt tolerant plants collected from around lakes on the volcanic plains.

Careful records are kept on a computer. This helps keep track of seed sources and collecting times.

In conjunction with Neville Oddie at Chepstowe, they have 35 000 tubes of local eucalypts, acacias, allocasuarinas, leptospermums and melaleucas ready for sale to farmers and land care groups.

At various place during the excursion we collected seeds for propagation. Silky teatree *Leptospermum myrsinoides* had only set sparse seed pods this year. Milky Beauty-Heads *Calocephalus lacteus* were growing densely along a creek near Berringa. On a roadside near Mannibadar we collected Blue Devil *Eryngium rostratum* but the Lemon Beauty-Heads *Calocephalus citreus* was not mature enough to be harvested.

We inspected a lightly grazed paddock near Dereel. There were scattered Snow Gums *Eucalyptus pauciflora* and clumps of Grass trees *Xanthorea minor*. Small flowering plants which caught our attention were Cranberry Heath *Astroloma humifusum*, Parson's Bands *Eriochilus cucullatus*, and Sharp Midge Orchid *Genoplesium despectans*. Another unusual plant, Hairy Tails *Ptilotus erubescens*, was found growing in an old gravel pit near Illabarook.

While having lunch alongside the Woody Yaloak River a Brown Falcon flew overhead, calling loudly. Several more Brown Falcons were seen on roadside posts.

We saw road works which had destroyed a remnant of native vegetation. The area at a road junction had scalped an area previously growing native grasses and saltbush. The disturbed soil provide an ideal seed bed for introduced grasses and weeds.

Our last stop was Guthrie's Falls on Mount Emu Creek. Water has eroded a gorge through the basalt and a hard band of rock has formed a water fall. The steep sides of the gorge help to protect plants from grazing stock.

JG

MARY WHITE

Miss Mary White, OAM, a foundation member and honorary life member of the club, died at Easter in the Lorne Hospital. She was a great friend and supporter of the club and an outstanding conservationist. Her exemplary commitment over 20 years to the study, improvement and protection of the natural coastal environment around Anglesea and Airey's Inlet was recognised with the award of the OAM and an honorary science degree from Deakin University.

Mary White first gained a love of natural history as a child growing up on an isolated farm in the Otways, near Apollo Bay. Later, as a teacher, she continued to study nature as her duties took her to various parts of Victoria, other eastern states and overseas.

In the club's 25th anniversary history in 1977, she recalled the formation of the club during her teaching years in the Ballarat region:

"One day when I was exploring the bush out Creswick way I met Alan Sonsee, who told me of the plan to start a Field Naturalists Club in Ballarat. As I had always been a naturalist at heart, I was very thrilled at the chance to meet others with the same interest. The naturalists were a very friendly group; the most knowledgeable and senior members were always ready to explain things to the youngest and rawest recruit ...there weren't any self-important people; we were all friends..."

Miss White certainly followed this precept throughout her life, sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm with others.

After retiring as principal of Ballarat Girls High School in 1975, she moved to Anglesea where a new challenge awaited her as secretary of Angair Conservation Society. She became a leader of this very active group which has done so much to preserve the

coastal forests, bush and heathland. Her home became a teaching museum of natural history for school groups and visitors. She published a number of books and pamphlets on the flora of the region and did small watercolour paintings of the flowering plants and marine life. Her botanical collection has been given to the Victorian Herbarium. Because of her expert knowledge, her opinions were sought and respected by government departments.

Miss White was a hands-on conservationist - a woman of action, not mere words. She worked assiduously not just in botanical field work and research but on the back breaking task of eradicating noxious weeds in the area. She was in continual demand to lead excursions, willingly sharing her knowledge of the environment and the values of conservation.

Her several publications include "The Flowers of Anglesea River Valley" and "Coastal Vegetation of Anglesea-Airey's Inlet Region", texts which she also illustrated. She will be greatly missed.

M Rotheram



FRED ROGERS

1927 - 1996

Fred Rogers, aged 68 years, died in March 1996 at his property near Horsham.

In his early years he played cricket, baseball and tennis and was invited to play District Cricket for the Melbourne club of Richmond.

Before retirement, Fred was a school principal. He was also a noted author and his enjoyment of natural history, particularly in the field of Australian plants, led him to write several books including "A Field Guide to Victorian Wattles", "Growing Australian Plants", "Growing More Australian Plants" and "Guide to Plants in the Little Desert and Mt Arapiles Area". He co-founded the Ringwood Field Naturalists' Club and was honoured by the Ringwood Council with the "FJC Rogers Reserve" at Heathmont. He was a member of the Maroondah and Wimmera SGAP groups and gave more than 2000 natural history lectures in addition to speaking on radio for many years.

Fred Rogers was State President of SGAP Victoria from 1963 to 1968 and was awarded the Australian Natural History Medallion in 1991 for his contribution to the understanding of Australian natural history. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge for more than 40 years.

Fred is survived by his wife June and children James, Peter, Suzanne and Patricia and ten grandchildren.

PJM



IN QUEST OF THE LITTLE DUMPY

On the excursion of April 21 a small but intrepid group sallied south to the You Yangs Regional Park in search of the Brittle Greenhood (*Pterostylis truncata*) alias Little Dumpy.

From the rendezvous at Meredith a three car convey moved off under the leadership of Lyndsay Fink. On arrival at the Park, Ranger Geoff Gayner provided valuable information and the convoy travelled first to an eastern section of the park for a brief exploration of the bush, where the Masked Owl had been sighted in recent times. Regeneration on the slopes is quite dense, particularly in the stands of Golden Wattle.

Then on to the north eastern section, at Stockyards, where the quest was fulfilled - nice patches of Brittle Greenhoods in various stages of development. These plants were on a high, open slope, in shallow granitic soil over rock. It seems that association with Rock Fern may be an indicator. The flowers are handsome - translucent, green and white with red-brown labellum and markings, and at some 4 cm in length are approximately half the height of the plant.

Lunch break was taken at The Saddle, followed by a walk to a former Aboriginal rock shelter nearby. After 3 pm Geoff met members at Big Rock and led a walk to a small but effective Aboriginal well off Rockwell Road. More specimens of Brittle Greenhood were discovered in this area.

Bird life was generally quiet - some 18 species were observed, ranging from Scarlet Robin to Little Eagle. Many dead samples of the brilliant Sapphire Weevil were found, and an interesting range of fungi.

The weather was fine but overcast, and the venture proved to be most enjoyable.

GB



PEREGRINE FALCONS

Vic Hurley spoke at our April meeting. He leads the Victorian Peregrine Project - a group of keen and knowledgeable volunteers studying these birds throughout Victoria. Sponsorship helps enormously - both in providing essential equipment and helping with publicity.

The Fisheries and Wildlife Department began a nest study of Peregrine Falcons in 1975 - they recorded and studied 20 nest sites near Melbourne for several years. Vic was concerned about the validity of the data and set out to do some extra research - this led eventually to the VPP.

Peregrines prefer cliffs for nesting but will also use trees - particularly the large Redgums with hollows and cover for sticknests. The Belah is also a preferred tree in the north west of the state. Over 200 nesting sites have now been recorded.

Optus is a sponsoring body and the Optus Centre in Collins Street is well known to many Victorians. Falcons have been nesting on a high ledge here since 1991 - they were then laying eggs in a cold, wet gutter but since the installation of a "nesting tray" three or four chicks have hatched each year since 1991.

Vic feels the population is not declining in Victoria but attractive nest sites must be maintained. With the loss of tree cover other potential sites are of interest. Quarries are being used more and the VPP, using advanced mountaineering techniques, have installed "cages" on rock faces as possible sites.

Of particular interest was the study at the Devils Kitchen at Pigoreet, a nesting site much studied by our members. Pigeon bands (pigeons being a source of food for the Peregrines) have been found in the nesting sites with an average of three bands annually with the earliest bands being dated from 1898. Vic is concerned that the sites here are not disturbed - any attempts to provide human paths and viewing areas above nests would be disastrous.

Our thanks to Vic for travelling from Melbourne to talk to us and providing so much information about his work.